



NEWS RELEASE

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APHIS IMPLEMENTS NEW ELECTRONIC SYSTEM TO ENHANCE COMPLIANCE WITH BIOTECHNOLOGY REGULATIONS

WASHINGTON, Oct. 29, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has launched a new biotechnology compliance component to its ePermits system that will allow the agency to initiate, process and track compliance inspections for the field testing of regulated genetically engineered organisms.

The ePermits system is a Web-based tool that allows the electronic filing, processing and tracking of permit applications. The system allows individuals to process permit applications on-line for biotechnology regulatory services' notifications and permits, as well as certain plant protection and quarantine and veterinary services' permits. Submitting applications and receiving permits via the Internet save customers a tremendous amount of time and effort. It also enables APHIS regulatory officials to issue and track permits, reducing delivery time and expense.

The updated system quickly and efficiently imports and processes data, including inspection locations and APHIS inspection reports. Reports of non-compliance discovered through inspections will also be handled electronically through this system improvement.

With these enhancements, APHIS can quickly search compliance history, allowing the agency to more easily identify, track and resolve potential problem areas and compliance incidents. The updated system will greatly enhance overall management of the inspection program while reducing costs. Future planned enhancements include the capability to combine inspection data with real-time weather data to monitor compliance conditions when bad weather strikes.

APHIS is responsible for regulating the importation, interstate movement and environmental release of certain genetically engineered organisms. Developers are responsible for following APHIS' regulations for the safe environmental release of genetically engineered organisms, and APHIS ensures compliance with all regulatory requirements through high-quality inspections, comprehensive investigations and prompt enforcement efforts. APHIS is committed to ensuring safety in the development of genetically engineered organisms and continues to strengthen approaches to regulating environmental releases.

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